

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

RSC-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00

OMB-01 INT-05 GSA-01 /043 W
----- 107320

R 310614Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4953

INFO AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMCONSUL BRISBANE BY POUCH

AMCONSUL PERTH BY POUCH

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EARL, EMIN, EINV, AS

SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER ATTEMPTS TO REVIVE

ALWEST PROJECT

REF: A. STATE 274481 (NOTAL)

B. CANBERRA 7275

C. CANBERRA A-52, APRIL 3, 1974

1. PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM ANNOUNCED JAN. 30 THAT GOA
WILL ALLOW ALWEST BAUXITE-ALUMINA PROJECT IN WESTERN
AUSTRALIA, WHICH IT APPROVED "IN PRINCIPLE" LAST
MARCH (REF C) BUT REFUSED TO LET GO AHEAD MAINLY
BECAUSE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND OWNERSHIP OBJECTIONS,
TO PROCEED IF THREE NEW CONDITIONS ARE MET. GOA IS
NOW WILLING TO SEE PROJECT GO FORWARD IF:

(A) AUSTRALIAN INTERESTS OWN 60 PERCENT (VICE 51
PERCENT ORIGINALLY) OF MINE; (B) WA STATE GOVERNMENT
UP-DATES AND PUBLISHES ITS ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES ON
ALWEST; AND (C) ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING PROCEDURES
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ARE MADE MANDATORY. WHITLAM ALSO SAID AUSTRALIAN

INTERESTS SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN RELATED ALUMINA REFINERY. PENALTY ON LONG-TERM FOREIGN BORROWINGS (BDR), WHICH ALSO HELD UP PROJECT IN 1974, WAS RESCINDED EARLIER.

2. PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL TOLD EMBASSY OFFICER THAT NEITHER REYNOLDS METALS, WHICH WOULD HAVE OWNED 70 PERCENT OF REFINERY UNDER ORIGINAL PROPOSAL BUT HAS MORE RECENTLY SAID IT HAS SHELVED THE PROJECT (REF B), NOR W.A. STATE GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAS CLASHED WITH GOA OVER HOLD-UP OF ALWEST IN PAST, HAS AGREED TO ACCEPT THESE NEW CONDITIONS.

3. EMBASSY COMMENT: EMBASSY AND AMCONSUL PERTH WILL CHECK OUT SITUATION FURTHER AND REPORT AS APPROPRIATE. MEANWHILE, WHITLAM'S ANNOUNCEMENT APPEARS TO BE ANOTHER ALMOST DESPERATE EFFORT BY GOA TO STIMULATE BUSINESS ACTIVITY IN FACE OF MOUNTING UNEMPLOYMENT AND OTHER ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. SIMILARLY, IT PROBABLY SIGNIFIES INCREASED GOA WILLINGNESS, AS INDICATED BY PM'S NOVEMBER 3 MODIFICATION OF FOREIGN MINING INVESTMENT POLICY (REF B), TO SOFTEN ITS CONDITIONS FOR SUCH INVESTMENT.
HARROP

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